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CONTACT:

97-112
Jay Ziegler
Kirsten Powers
Chris Wilkas
202-395-3230

**U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY ANNOUNCES
AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL ON LOWER TARIFFS FOR U.S. ALMOND EXPORTS**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky announced today that the United States and Israel have reached an agreement which substantially lowers fees charged by Israel on imports of U.S. almonds. The U.S. and Israel are parties to a Free Trade Agreement signed in 1985, which was supplemented by a special agreement on agriculture in 1996.

“I am delighted that the U.S. and Israel have been able to reach an agreement which will significantly improve access to the Israeli market for U.S. almond exports, while not affecting the volume of our raisin and prune exports,” said Ambassador Barshefsky. “We will continue to work with Israel under our Free Trade Agreement to increase access to the Israeli market for U.S. agricultural products.”

Israel had been charging an import fee based on a reference price of \$9.00/kg, which, depending on the price of almonds, could result in a tariff as high as \$4.00/kg. The agreement reduces the tariff on shelled almonds to \$1.80/kg for a tariff rate quota of 2000 metric tons. For quantities above 2000 metric tons, the tariff will be \$8.00/kg minus the invoice price. It also reduces the tariff on in-shell almonds to \$1.35/kg for a new tariff rate quota of 180 metric tons. For quantities above 180 metric tons, the duty will be \$6.50/kg minus the invoice price. In addition, the agreement restores a February 1 through June 30 seasonal quota for Israeli imports of raisins and prunes and introduces a May 1 through December 31 season for the Israeli quota on sunflower seeds. Seasonal quotas should not affect the volume of U.S. exports of these products because the products have a long shelf life. The Government of Israel also made commitments to ensure that seasonality will not impair the ability of the United States to export the full quota volume of these products and that the United States is to receive priority status on any additional import quotas.